

can possess any real charm unless it be well executed. Good material and good workmanship are essential to a fine building; and there is nothing more insulting to art, more degrading to its professors, or that is a fouler blot on the fair face of nature, than the myriads of *mal-built dwellings* that have sprung up under the present system of competition—a system against which every lover of art should raise his voice, but which has been too little rebuked by the literary organs of the day. It is a hypocritical worship of the beautiful to aim at giving an architectural character to a building, while neglecting every principle of durability and strength, and thus yielding it up, from the hour of its foundation, a prey to premature decay. Compared with such erections, the wigwam of the Indian is a bower of bliss; it is constructed in obedience to nature's instinct, and outrages no art. Goodness of execution must be held not less important than beauty of design. If, in our wanderings through the streets of a town, the houses appear substantially built, and sufficiently large to contain comfortable accommodation, and show, by the variety of their form, position, and arrangement, that a corresponding variety in the disposition and habits of their occupants has been provided for, the mind is pleased and satisfied, though there be little or no provision for architectural beauty. There is a beauty in the evidence of comfort, accommodation, and adaptation to habits of decency,—of a sphere being afforded for the exercise of the virtues and affections,—there is a beauty in fitness, and propriety, and truth,—that must ever charm the reflective and honest mind, and go far to compensate for any æsthetic defects or omissions.

It is this that gives the charm to the country homestead, the humble cottage on the mountain-road: there is no vain pretence, no hypocritical display of art. It is the offspring, not of pseudo-taste and real avarice, but of common sense; and is adapted to the comfort and accommodation—to every convenience the simple nature of its inmates demands. A moral halo surrounds such dwellings; and the mind of the spectator is pleased and satisfied; he sees nothing that grates upon his feelings, nothing but what harmonises with his idea of social comfort, of virtue and happiness. Ardent lovers of art though we are, we must appreciate such qualities as these, and should recommend convenience and comfort, spaciousness and stability, before style, and anything before hypocritical pretence.

This brings me to a subject on which I have long wished to speak—the state of the dwellings of the labouring classes, or rather of the very poor. Model-houses are establishing in London: something of the kind are needed elsewhere. We want dwellings for the poor, accommodation for comfort, cleanliness, and decency, not merely inclosed spaces in which it is barely possible to endure life, but homes, in the English sense of the word. Let the hovel of the labourer be compared with the mansion of the merchant, bearing in mind that they are inhabited by creatures in the same divine image, and who would not be shocked by the contrast? Nay, I consider that a picture of many of our court-houses, placed in juxtaposition with one of the better class of stables, would be a sufficient satire. Why should any houses be so constructed that the rules of decency cannot be observed? Humanity is as beautiful, hath music in it as sweet, in the cottage as in the palace; and the comfort and happiness of those in the vale of life, and the true interest of the more favoured of fortune who look down on them from its heights, are objects equally dear to every real philanthropist.

The defects of these dwellings are legion: quality, quantity, character, arrangement, are alike wanting. Some, that but little fault could be found with in other respects, are so small, that they would be suitable residences only for a race of pigmies. So far from being model houses, they are models of houses, and would seem to be built on the supposition that the poor are not even of the same stature as the rich. "This," I know many would reply, "is owing to the limited means of the poor; they might have larger houses if they could pay for them." But I am quite sure the poor should have larger houses for the money they do pay, and would have, if humane and wealthy indi-

viduals, who would be satisfied with a reasonable interest for their money, would undertake the task of providing them. A noble and philanthropic undertaking! The building of houses for the poor has been hitherto left to the speculator, who must have an usurious interest in return. While the man of 500*l.* a-year and upwards pays 5 per cent., or less, on the value of the house he occupies, the labourer of a guinea a-week pays from 10 to 15!

I should have dwelt more on those sanitary requirements for which it is the province of the art, assisted by science, to provide. But, "just, eloquent, and mighty Death" has, within the last twelve months, taken up the argument, and given a lecture so awful, that little is left to be said, and the subject is rendered almost holy ground. With a clearness that throws all human investigation into the shade, this dread commissioner has made his report upon the sources of disease in this country, which science should long ago have discovered, and which science or art should long ago have sealed. That what has passed will convince the most obtuse of their errors on this most important subject, and lead to a due consideration of, and obedience to, the conditions on which alone public health may be secured, it would be uncharitable to doubt.

SAMUEL HUGGINS.

NEW METROPOLITAN BUILDINGS BILL.

ON Saturday, April 27, a deputation from the committee of the Master Carpenters' Society, had an interview with Lord Seymour, at the office of Woods, respecting the new Buildings Bill. His lordship went through the various clauses carefully with the deputation, and promises his best attention to the suggestions of the various deputations from the builders and district surveyors, but feared that, owing to the difficult nature of the bill, he would not be able to introduce it this session of Parliament. The deputation made the strongest objection, as we have already done, to the threatened abasement of the referees. Mr. Bird desired very much to impress on his lordship the desirableness of having the referees to sit in open court, as magistrates do, with the registrar as legal adviser, in case his knowledge were required, the same as the clerk of the existing police courts, and to keep record of the proceedings.

A PRINCIPLE OR A PRINCIPAL.—WHICH?

It is with much regret I learn from your paper last week, the retirement of "J. F." from a conflict which I have watched with great interest, and in which, were my humble services likely to be of any use, I should give in my cordial adherence to "J. F." in all essential points, except one in his last letter, which was very possibly a slip of the pen. When, in his first rule, he says we are to plan a building with reference solely to its actual purposes, and to no past style, I perfectly agree with him; but when, in rule 3, relating to ornament, he repeats the same clause, I must humbly differ. For the word *no*, I take the liberty of reading *every*,—with reference to every style known to the designer, and to every accessible source of artistic precedent, copying nothing, but digesting and assimilating everything containing nutriment, be it from old Egypt or young America,—from polished Greece or the savage isles of the south; but swallowing nothing unchewed, adopting nothing without a distinctly understood reason, and insisting that neither antiquity nor novelty are any reasons at all.

I should not have troubled you with this remark merely to correct "J. F." who, I am quite sure, has too much erudition and intelligence ever to follow literally his own rule in the form he has here inadvertently given it; but to save, perhaps, some young reader of his letters, the time and trouble that would be inevitably wasted in any attempt to carry out a method of design which never has led to any excellence, and I firmly believe never will lead to any; while the method I would substitute is traceable in all the forms of past excellence, and more in proportion as they are more excellent. I need not remind you how all late researches in the east add

accumulated evidence that the Greek system was a general fusion (thoroughly digested and Hellenised) of choice ideas, picked out from the buildings of many tribes in all three continents. And of the only rival to that system, the same is abundantly evident. But for the crusades, filling Europe with travelled observers, our ancestors might have wallowed in Romanesque barbarism till the "Renaissance." The finest form of half-developed Gothic, that which we term Early English (and which every examination more fully convinces me was mainly the composition of a single mind), not only retains undisguised the Arab element of foil-arching, but is pervaded with ideas drawn from the Roman, Byzantine, and especially ancient Greek sources, engrafted on the improved Romanesque stock just where they were wanted (and nowhere else), and all ground down and assimilated in the powerful transforming gizzard of some great, but now nameless artist. Mitford, in his "Principles of Design in Architecture," well remarks of Salisbury Cathedral, that its designer could not have been unacquainted with either the Roman or Grecian styles. Himself doubtless a crusader or pilgrim, he had certainly seen the Greek remains, and seen them to more purpose than either Stuart or Leroy.

As the grand question, however, of mimicry or reality is for the present stopped in your columns, my object now is to ask whether you will admit the discussion of another, which, though it may seem trivial compared with the above, has yet no small bearing on the architecture of the day, even if not involving (as I think it does) the fate of a principle very generally followed in ancient and mediæval practice, and held up by all modern theorists (though with small effect on our practice), viz., the principle of constructive and decorative truth or consistency,—the second (if I remember right) of Mr. Ruskin's lamps, and which should have been the first. The fact is this,—having very early in my studies encountered this principle, and become strongly biased in its favour, I soon found that it applied to all the admired productions of the past, with one notable exception, the Gothicized timber roof, of which Westminster Hall is the great generic type. To my admission of this principle they offered a stumbling block, nor have all my efforts sufficed to reconcile them. Years ago I was forced to conclude, that if this be really a principle, the admiration bestowed on these roofs must be all along misplaced; and that if they be right, this supposed principle is moonshine, and architecture is (reversing Mr. Pugin's definition) *constructed decoration*, and nothing more. Which should be condemned, the roofs or the principle, remained, however, with me an open question, till, finding that, to escape the hollow mockery of practising an art on which I had no fixed principles, some decision on this point was necessary,—and increasing weight being continually thrown into that scale which was, I own, from the outset rather preponderant,—I at length decided—for the principle and against Westminster Hall and its class.

You see, Sir, this question will, if worth arguing, touch directly on present practice; because, if (as I hold) Gothic open roofs are altogether inadmissible, it will follow, first, that with all our Gothic copyism, we have not made a true copy yet; and secondly, that in the innumerable modern churches where the funds are inadequate to vaulting, the adoption of the Gothic style has been a mistake, that style being applicable only to vaulted buildings. The first conclusion must needs be unpalatable to all who have built Gothic churches, the second to all who wish to build them; besides which I must expect the unrelenting opposition of two other classes of professors, viz., all the trouble-sparing and all who are grossly deficient in geometry and statics; because the requirement of vaulting in any work on which they were engaged would give to the first much more extra trouble than extra per centage, and would expose the incompetency of the second. Indeed I cannot think of any one improvement (except a strict diploma system) that would so tend to purge the profession, as a recognition by the public of the manifold advantages of real Gothic (or compressible) construction, and an exaction thereof now and then. Of course, I do not imagine it would drive out all pretenders, and leave us only true artists; but